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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 7366
SUBMITTED BY JANE HYLAN, MPH
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, INC.**

Good morning Representative Sayers, Senator Handley, and members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Jane Hylan. I am the Director of School Health Services for the Community Health Center, Inc. I am here today to speak in support of Raised Bill 7366, An Act Concerning School Based Health Clinics and Community-Based Health Centers. We cannot speak of school health services without speaking of community health services; indeed we cannot speak of health in Connecticut without speaking of these two vital components of our health care system.

This year, we are seeing that the building problem of people with no health insurance has reached crescendo heights. Perhaps that is because it's reached so deeply into the working, middle class, population. Our legislators, our journalists, our families, our advocates are united in a common agreement that something needs to be done. It is a complex problem and won't be solved easily, but we do have proven solutions to put on the table. Our State of Connecticut can provide the support to put a community health center in every community that needs one, to ensure school based health services in every school system that needs them, and to link these two critical elements of care together.

Over the past several years, we have seen an erosion of state support for community health center development and operations, not an increase as one might think. Today, Connecticut provides less funding, not more, than it did ten years ago to community health centers. Connecticut has not provided funding for new start up community health centers in a decade, and has only sporadically provided assistance in starting new school based health services.

This needs to change. The cost of undertaking such an initiative is in the millions of dollars. But it is an investment that can be undertaken now and that is proven to yield real and substantial improvement in health care access and most importantly, in health outcomes.

We cannot have strong school health services without strong community health centers. When the school day ends, there must be a linkage to primary care for

the students. Too many of our towns and cities in Connecticut still do not have a community health center, nor school based health services.

I therefore support the establishment of the committee to assist the commissioner of public health in examining and evaluating methods to strengthen and expand the delivery of care through school based health clinics and to support the development of new community health centers.

You have absolutely identified several critical areas to look it in the area of school health services, among these enhancements to the standard model for full time comprehensive SBHCs, taking another look at licensure requirement, particularly for mobile dental services, and ensuring both start up funds for new services a stable source of funds for on-going operations.

I would suggest in addition, that the Department also look at establishing a process for determining priority communities for the development of new start community health centers as well as expansion of existing health centers. Wherever possible, the link between health centers and school health services should be strengthened and supported.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.